

NEWS RELEASE

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Springfield Restaurant Owner Arrested, Charged with Harboring and Employing Illegal Aliens

16 Illegal Aliens Taken into ICE Custody in Worksite Enforcement Investigation

Springfield, IL - Rodger A. Heaton, United States Attorney for the Central District of Illinois, announced that a co-owner of a Springfield restaurant, Buffet City located at 1774 Wabash Avenue, has been arrested and charged by criminal complaint with harboring and unlawfully employing illegal aliens. Xiang Hui Ye, age 28, of 3301 Gaines Mill Road, Springfield, Illinois was arrested on the complaint on September 20, 2006. Hui Ye, a Chinese citizen who was granted asylum in the U.S., made an initial appearance in federal court today, before U.S. Magistrate Judge Byron G. Cudmore. Both the preliminary hearing and detention hearing are scheduled for tomorrow, September 22, 2006, at 2:30 p.m., before Magistrate Judge Cudmore.

The affidavit filed in support of the criminal complaint alleges that from January 15, 2005 to September 11, 2006, Hue Ye hired illegal aliens to work at the restaurant and provided housing for the workers in apartments located near the restaurant. The complaint alleges that a review of payroll information by a U.S. Department of Labor investigator determined that Buffet City underpaid workers \$266,366 during a two-year period.

If convicted, the statutory penalty for the felony offense of harboring illegal aliens is up to 10 years in prison for each alien. For the misdemeanor offense of hiring or recruiting illegal aliens for employment, the penalty is up to six months in prison and a fine of \$3,000 for each illegal alien.

The charges are the result of a criminal worksite investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement with assistance from the U.S. Department of Labor. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Patrick J. Chesley in the Springfield Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In addition to the charges against Hui Ye, ICE agents arrested 16 illegal aliens who had been employed at the Buffet City restaurant. Six Mexican males, two Chinese females, and eight Chinese males are currently in ICE custody facing deportation.

(More)

In fiscal year 2005, ICE initiated 511 criminal worksite investigations nationwide. These cases resulted in 176 criminal arrests, 140 criminal indictments and 127 criminal convictions. Through May of fiscal year 2006, ICE has launched more than 219 criminal worksite investigations. These cases have resulted in 382 criminal arrests, 82 criminal indictments, and 80 criminal convictions. Furthermore, these efforts have resulted in the arrest of 2,100 individuals on administrative immigration violations.

Members of the public are reminded that a complaint is merely an accusation; the defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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